

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 OTTAWA 03077 201545Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 ICAE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 HA-05 /055 W
-----003402 201553Z /53

O 201512Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7767

INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL

ALL OTHER CONSULATES IN CANADA BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 03077

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL REACTION TO CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE IS
LUKEWARM AT BEST

REF: OTTAWA 2943

1. TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT CLEARLY WILL HAVE ITS HANDS FULL IN TRYING TO SELL ITS CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE TO PROVINCIAL PREMIERS AND THE CANADIAN PEOPLE. EVEN WITHOUT DETAILS OF PHASE ONE LEGISLATION, PROVINCIAL LEADERS, NEARLY TO A MAN, HAVE OUTLINED RESERVATIONS WHILE OSTENSIBLY ADOPTING A WAIT AND SEE ATTITUDE. MOST SYMPATHETIC RESPONSES, FROM NOVA SCOTIA PREMIER REGAN AND BC PREMIER BENNETT, WERE HARDLY GROUNDS FOR TRUDEAU GOV OPTIMISM: REGAN WAS "GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE" OF GOC PROPOSALS WHILE BENNETT EXPRESSED "GUARDED OPTIMISM." ON OTHER END OF SPECTRUM WERE ALBERTA'S INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS MIN HYNDMAN WHO INDICATED PROPOSALS WOULD SET BACK WESTERN CANADA FIVE DECADES, AND, OF COURSE, QUEBEC PREMIER LEVESQUE WITH HIS "STILLBORN MOUSE" COMMENT.

2. CANADIAN PEOPLE BY AND LARGE DO NOT SEEM TO CARE ONE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 OTTAWA 03077 201545Z

WAY OR THE OTHER ABOUT THE PROPOSALS. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM HAS BEEN SUBJECT OF PERIODIC AND UNSUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION FOR MORE THAN 50 YEARS. PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ) GOVERNMENT ELECTION IN 1976, MOREOVER, PROVIDED AN INTERVAL OF POPULAR CONCERN FOR UNITY QUESTIONS, INCLUDING CONSTITUTION, BUT THIS SUBSIDED AS APPARENT IMMEDIACY OF PQ THREAT WANED. MANY CANADIANS, IT SEEMS, NOW DO NOT WANT

TO BE BOTHERED BY THE SUBJECT.

3. THIS MIXTURE OF APATHY AND HOSTILITY COULD, IN EMBASSY VIEW, CAUSE TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT TO MOVE IN ONE OF TWO QUITE DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. ON ONE HAND, IT MIGHT DECIDE TO PLAY THE GAME ACCORDING TO TRADITIONAL RULES AND TRY TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS OF ALL PROVINCES, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF QUEBEC, ON ALL ELEMENTS OF PACKAGE INCLUDING PHASE ONE PROPOSALS WHICH COULD BE PASSED WITHOUT FORMAL PROVINCIAL ASSENT. IF CONSULTATIONS REVEAL MORE MAJOR DIFFERENCES THAN AGREEMENT (AS IS LIKELY), FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MIGHT SIMPLY LET ENTIRE PACKAGE SLIDE INTO HISTORY WITH OTHER SUCH UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS OVER PAST FIVE DECADES.

4. ON OTHER HAND, TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT MIGHT GET ITS BACK UP IF PROVINCES BUDGE LITTLE OR NOT AT ALL FROM TRADITIONAL PAROCHIALISM AND IT MIGHT RAM PHASE ONE LEGISLATION (INCLUDING CONSTITUTIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS, REFORM OF SENATE AND SUPREME COURT) THROUGH PARLIAMENT. INDEED, IT IS POSSIBLE, ALTHOUGH UNLIKELY, THAT TRUDEAU WILL IF SUFFICIENTLY PROVOKED DECIDE TO PATRIATE CONSTITUTION AND ENACT AN AMENDING FORMULA THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATION. AT MOST RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE, HE INDICATED THIS WAS WITHIN POWERS OF FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SUCH UNILATERAL ACTION WOULD

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 OTTAWA 03077 201545Z

CREATE AN UPROAR IN FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS. FOR THIS REASON, HE INDICATED, PATRIATION AND AMENDING FORMULA ARE WITHIN PHASE TWO (FOR NEGOTIATION WITH PROVINCES) RATHER THAN PHASE ONE (FOR PARLIAMENTARY ACTION).

5. GOING IT ALONE, WITHOUT WIDESPREAD PROVINCIAL SUPPORT, ON PHASE ONE PROPOSALS RUNS RISK OF RUPTURING WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OTTAWA AND PROVINCES. IT MIGHT, HOWEVER, GAIN POPULAR IMAGE OF DECISIVENESS FOR TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT WHICH IS PARTICULARLY SHORT ON THAT IMAGE AT PRESENT. IN ANY CASE, TRUDEAU SIGNALLED, IN LAST WEEK'S WHITE PAPER, THAT THIS IS WAY IN WHICH HIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO MOVE BY JULY, 1979. ENDERS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978OTTAWA03077
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780257-0045
Format: TEL
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780640/aaaabina.tel
Line Count: 107
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 2ab14685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 OTTAWA 2943
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2284783
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROVINCIAL REACTION TO CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE IS LUKEWARM AT BEST
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2ab14685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014